

**DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 22, 2005**

Members Present: Thompson, Carroll, Ennis, Harden, Kitson, Lardizzone, Magner, Morris, Wasson and Webb

Members Excused: Newstadt, Phillips, Spitzfaden and Timberman

Guests: Mike Berardi (Nason Construction, Inc.), John Kohlhas and Raymond Maggi (gbqc architects-Becker Morgan Group Architectural Engineering), Bill Holloway (BHH Architects), Al Carter (SOS) and Jim Burke (First Annual Defenders of Freedom Run/Walk), Col Tom Ciccariella and Col Eugenia Thornton (Military Retiree Pay Tax Initiative), Fran Daney, Frank Davidson and Dave Gillan (KWVA), Burton Barr (NARFE), Dave White (DE DOL), Tom Daws and Ralph Hoag (VVA), Urie Glass (BLK VET OF All Wars) and J Cameron Yorkston (DOS)

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nation's Flag.

Commissioner Harden and Commissioner Carroll reported that Commissioner Phillips has been moved from the VA Hospital to the VA Nursing Home, West 1.

Chairman Thompson covered items provided in the Commissioner's folders. There was information provided about the African American Medal of Honor Recipients Memorial Service. There will be a National Medal of Honor Celebration held at DAFB Museum on March 24, 2005, 12:00 PM. There was discussion about the name for the new Delaware Veterans Home.

MOTION BY LARDIZZONE TO NAME THE NEW VETERANS HOME THE DELAWARE VETERANS HOME, SECONDED BY KITSON, MOTION CARRIED.

DAS VETERANS HOME UPDATE

Mr. Berardi, Mr. Kohlhas, Mr. Maggi, and Mr. Holloway briefed on overall concepts, changes and blueprints of the Veterans Home building and answered questions. They assured the Commissioners that the same concepts will be briefed to the Steering Committee. After the presentation and discussion of the new building plans, the Commission was asked their preference of plans A and B, and plan A was preferred unanimously.

Mr. Ciccariella reported on the progress of the legislation for the Military Retiree Pay Tax Initiative and asked for assistance in getting it passed.

Mr. Carter reported on the Veterans Home Fund as of March 1, 2005, and discussed setting up protocol for raising funds for the Delaware Veterans Home. Mr. Burke and Mr. Carter discussed the aspects surrounding the First Annual Defenders of Freedom Run/Walk fundraising event. They requested the Commission take on this fundraising event as their own and let them know at the next meeting if they could support the event.

Mr. Gillan expressed displeasure about what he heard concerning the entrance criteria requirements for the new Veterans Home. Chairman Thompson reported that the requirements for the admission criteria have not been finalized.

Mr. Davidson reported that the State of Delaware employee veterans' pension issue is being reintroduced and asked for everyone's support in getting that passed.

Commissioner Kitson had a correction to the February minutes, at the bottom of page two, under organizational report for the VFW; it should read "Commander in Chief" not "Commander and Chief".

MOTION BY KITSON TO ACCEPT FEBRUARY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES AS CORRECTED, SECONDED BY WEBB, MOTION CARRIED.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Commissioner Kitson, Vice Chairman for the Southern Cemetery, reported that there will be a Family Advisory Cemetery Committee (FACC) meeting on May 17, 2005, 6:00 PM. Commissioner Harden reported that she will make sure a Commission Cemetery Committee meeting is scheduled for the Northern Cemetery.

COMMEMORATIVE AFFAIRS

Commissioner Kitson reported that he will have the name of the guest speaker for the Memorial Day Service by the next meeting.

FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

No report.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Commissioner Carroll reported that the actual figure in the Home Fund as of March 21, 2005, is \$138,316.49. He also brought up the issue that the name that had been previously chosen for the new Home site "Milford Heritage Commons" was very similar to the name of an existing nursing home on RT113, which is called "Milford Heritage Home". This may be conflicting for the Emergency Response Teams. The Commission was asked to review the name again and suggest an alternate. This issue was discussed and the Commission agreed that the new site name would be "Milford Independence Commons". This site name will be presented to the Steering Committee for approval. The Commissioners commented on the efforts and support provided by Tony Davila and his staff on this project. Kitson questioned an issue on the admission criteria and how the issues were being decided, discussion followed.

GROUND BREAKING & DEDICATION

No report.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

No report.

PERSONNEL

No report.

MONUMENTS & MEMORIALS

Commissioner Kitson reported that he is going to have a meeting with Committee members after next month's Commission meeting.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS

Harden (WAVES Nat'l) – She questioned the opening statement by Vice-Chairman Thompson in the February minutes in reference to sending a letter.

Thompson stated that the Attorney General said that the Vice-Chairman automatically becomes the Chairman if the Chairman is out, in compliance with Robert's Rules of Order.

Carroll (MOPH) - Reported that there were five members that attended their National Commanders Testimony to the Joint Veterans Affairs Committee in Washington, DC. Chapter 9377 in New Castle will have their annual luncheon on Saturday, April 9, 2005, and it is open to all veterans. The MOPH Convention will be on Saturday, June 18, 2005, 11:00 AM-3:00 PM, DAFB Museum Complex. One of the national officers will be there as a guest.

Magner (AMVETS) –Reported that AMVETS had a Department meeting on March 5, 2005, at the Commission office. While attending training, he had the opportunity to meet the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Jim Nicholson.

Ennis (KWVA) – Reiterated concerns made by Mr. Gillan concerning admission criteria for the new Veterans Home.

Lardizzone (DAV) – Chairman Thompson reported for Lardizzone that the DAV NSO Supervisor for the area, Mr. Jim Wyatt, passed away on March 15, 2005, and was buried yesterday.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commissioner Ennis expressed that the KWVA was concerned that the Commission may not be doing enough to gain possession of the new Veterans Home. Commissioner Thompson stated that they hope to have a meeting next month with the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees as one more attempt to gain possession. Commissioner Harden stated that she felt all members of the new Oversight Committee should be veterans, discussion followed.

Mr. Daws asked for clarification on the Commission's representation on the Steering Committee and their credibility if the Steering Committee can dismiss a vote that the Commission made. Chairman Thompson stated that the Commission gives them input, but they do not have to accept it. Further discussion followed on issues pertaining to the Veterans Home.

Commissioner Carroll questioned what is to be done now that the Vice Chairman's position is empty. He suggested they nominate and elect a new Vice-Chairman. Commissioner Carroll nominated Gary Morris as Vice Chairman, no other nominations were made, a vote was taken, and no one opposed Commissioner Morris as Vice Chairman. Commissioner Webb abstained from the vote because he did not feel the vote was legal. There was a discussion between Commissioner Webb and Chairman Thompson. Commissioner Magner requested a copy of the ruling from the Attorney General stating that Thompson's position of Chairman was to code. Chairman Thompson stated he would go to the Secretary of State and get a copy of it in writing.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: **APRIL 26, 2005 (11:00 AM)**

LOCATION: **Robbins Bldg, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, DE**

ADJOURNED